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Statement submitted by Legiao da Boa Vontade (Legion of Good Will), a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

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The Legion of Good Will, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, brings to the attention of the Commission on Status of Women the serious discrimination lived especially by black women throughout the world.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms the principle of the inadmissibility of discrimination and proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, including distinction based on sex.

For centuries women have been facing the consequences of a patriarchal society, constantly having more duties than rights. In the particular case of black women, only an exotic value has been attributed to them, either as sexual objects or as slaves or easy-to-manipulate servants. Victims of poverty and lack of opportunity, most of them have continuously been exploited in many ways.

It must be a commitment of each and every one to work for changing this unbearable situation. We must, through social and spiritual re-education, guarantee the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, especially black women, who, according to the League's President, José de Paiva Netto, have as much dignity, talent and value as anyone else. They can rise to the highest positions because of their competence, without having to humiliate or prostitute themselves. Liberation will come from instruction, access to equal education and through the knowledge of their own spiritual values.

Thanks to the Charter of the United Nations and the work of the Organization, now at the beginning of a new millennium, we see the remarkable attention the international community is giving, as never before, to ending racial discrimination; Governments around the world have committed themselves to promote and encourage universal respect and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, without distinction of race, sex, language, religion or colour.

The Legion of Good Will, in a spirit of cooperation, calls to the attention of the Commission on the Status of Women the urgent need of an international campaign on discrimination against black women, emphasizing that racism is obscene and pollutes any country's atmosphere.

The League suggests that women such as Dr. Gertrudes Mongela, who was Secretary-General of the Women's Conference in Beijing (which the Legion of Good Will attended) should be empowered within the United Nations system to lead that change of mentality around the world, travelling, lecturing, promoting events and raising the flag of a new era, when nobody will be judged because of his or her skin colour or gender.

The Legion of Good Will, concerned with the equal rights of men and women, especially black women, facilitates emergency aid services in Latin America (Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia and Argentina) for women in poverty and provides access to food, health, maternal child health care, education, professional training, orientation and job placement. In this way, it has joined forces for the fulfilment of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Moreover, the Legion of Good Will's radio, television and press systems are constantly emphasizing the principles expressed in this statement.

The League offers to the United Nations its means of communications to promote the proposed campaign to millions of people around the world.